

SOUTH AFRICAN RADIO LEAGUE HAMNET BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY
1 October 2006

This bulletin was compiled and prepared by Francois ZS6BUU

IN THE BULLETIN TODAY:-

HURRICANE KATRINA REVISITED

NEWS FROM REGIONS

GAUTENG SOUTH PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR VACANCY

HAMNET OVERVIEW

The National Bulletin is read at 12H00 CAT on 7,070MHz. We have had to revert back to the old frequency as we are interfering with a bulletin on 7:062MHz. Should this frequency change in future, you will be advised!

The bulletin is distributed to all Provincial Directors for reading on their local repeaters a few days prior to the first Sunday of every month. All subsequent Sundays are used to establish an informal net and exchange weather reports and other items of general interest.

The HAMNET section of the SARL website is open to all amateur radio operators. This is to encourage non League members to join the League and also to encourage newly licensed amateurs to consider joining HAMNET.

Please also note that HAMNET is a voluntary, non profit group of amateurs who make their unique communication skills available to assist and help others in distress during and after disasters.

Training Modules have been developed and are available either from your Provincial Director or from the National director via e-mail.

HAMNET forms part of the Constitution of the South African Radio League. That means that you have to be a member of the SARL to be a member of HAMNET.

Also join us on weekdays at 6pm local time for the HAMNET Weather Net on 3.760MHz. This net exchanges weather conditions around the country and is also useful as a propagation check.

HURRICANE KATRINA REVISITED

Much has been written, spoken and digested after the devastation caused by the cyclone Katrina in the New Orleans area of the United States. With credit to the CQ Magazine of November 2005, with no less than 6 articles looking at various aspects of Amateur Radio communication before and after the event!

There is just not enough time to elaborate on all the articles but having read some of them, certain sections are worth mentioning.

It is amazing how well prepared and organised the American amateur fraternity are when it comes to the various organisations they run to keep an eye out for untoward weather and other problems that may occur.

When the word went out that tropical depression #12 had strengthened to a tropical storm over the Bahamas, a warning was issued. Immediately amateur radio operators at the National Hurricane Centre, and those operating on the Hurricane Watch Net, began to prepare!

Nets were activated on both HF and VHF in both voice and digital modes. At one point, over 40 nets were active on HF prior to the cyclone hitting New Orleans. ARES and other nets were doing regular check-ins on both 40M and 80M.

The hurricane struck the coast with winds exceeding 145 mph or about 240 kph. Twenty four hours after the storm, 80% of the city was flooded and in places up to 20 feet deep. Normal communications were lost and as many as 40,000 people were seeking shelter outside of the city.

At that point, a desperate SOS went out as the situation was now a total disaster!

Many repeaters were out of action and with the flooding, many operators also had to flee to higher ground and regroup. At this point most of the organisation was coming out of Texas and volunteers were asked to be on standby but not to proceed to the affected areas. It was a case of doing a SITREP before deploying volunteers.

The Super dome in New Orleans at this stage was already full to capacity with 25,000 refugees being sheltered there.

At the Astrodome in Houston by this time, now two days after the devastation, volunteers were being organised but they had to be fully self equipped with radio s, spares, batteries, generators, food, clothing and so on. It was at this point that Amateur Radio volunteers were also asked to be on standby and available for at least the next two weeks and possibly for the next 30 days!

This communication network was now assuming monumental proportions!

There were many stories of amateur radio operators relaying word of someone needing to be rescued from a roof of a building or saying that they couldn't evacuate because of flooding, and some of these stories reached the world in general.

One message was relayed via an amateur operator in a coastal city in south China who sent an e-mail message to rescue head quarters after he picked up a distress message over the air! That message was relayed by a MARS coordinator in Massachusetts via another station in Arizona and eventually reached New Orleans. The rescue was later confirmed.

“This is what we have been training for” was the comment from Robert Hollister, Eastern Area Army MARS Coordinator. “Now is the time to show our commitment and our professionalism”.

What is also interesting is the number of organisations across the United States that are used in emergencies. Some of the acronyms include ARES RACES SHARES Us Army NETCOM MARS - SATERN, not forgetting The Salvation Army, the Red Cross and their radio communication networks.

Emergency communications went on for many weeks after the disaster and Amateur Radio played a critical role in assisting with various networks. At one stage, the Amateur Radio fraternity with all its structures were more aware of and better informed of the devastation than the Government in Washington and the White House.

Obviously, as soon as the real nature and extent of the devastation became apparent, the normal relief organisations went to work to take over the reorganisation of life in the devastated New Orleans and other towns affected by this massive hurricane still regarded as one the most severe ever recorded in the United States.

For many amateurs, Katrina was a learning experience and much information from shortcomings and other problems associated with total destruction of infrastructure, was learnt.

On the National Geographic TV channel the comment was made that the United States was totally unprepared for such a major disaster.

Let us hope that nothing so severe ever hits South Africa because at present most Disaster Management Organisations around the country are in disarray or being restructured.

Coincidentally, there was an excellent TV documentary on the Katrina Disaster on the History Channel on Friday 24 September.

NEWS FROM REGIONS

WESTERN CAPE

Pierre ZS1HF was placed on standby on 16 Sept 2006 22.30B by Kevin Tromp (High Angle Rescue), a Wilderness Search and Rescue (WSAR) manager, for a rescue at first light near the Du Toitskloof Tunnel. Two mountaineers were climbing up a gorge and one had slipped and fell. The survivor contacted Metro EMS and alerted them to his problem. HAMNET Western Cape, High Angle Rescue, Table Mountain Rescue, SAPS, Metro EMS and the SA Air Force were requested to respond.

The first team rendezvoused with the survivor at roughly 07.00B, while the other team carried on the search for the missing person. Sadly, his body was found on the side of the mountain at roughly 12.00B by means of an air-search. A team of four rescuers were airlifted to recover the body. Two rescuers were

left behind due to the winch jamming up, but were recovered from the mountain once the rain and visibility had improved

Many thanks to Christie ZR1CVZ, Jenny (Christies partner) and Gerrie ZR1Y, for assisting with logistics (tent, coffee and snacks) and communications. Although communication was mainly line-of-sight between the rescuers and the vehicle, at certain stages communications was difficult as the chopper and rescuers moved behind certain ridges and gullies.

Metro EMS deployed their emergency communication vehicle, c/s Metro 1, which is fitted out with a UHF Tetra Tx/Rx, GM300 VHF, Marine and Air Band Tx/Rxers. This vehicle was used to communicate with the Oryx, Metro Control in Cape Town and with the rescuers. The rescue was conducted on the WSAR simplex frequency and 122,400MHz between the Metro 1 and the Oryx

Sadly, the climber who died was Lloyd Turner and our condolences go to his family and friends.

To Pierre and his team, congratulations on a job well done and maintaining a positive HAMNET presence with the Western Cape and Wilderness S & R. organisations.

GAUTENG SOUTH

The Liberty Classic cycle race took place on Sunday the 24th of September. This race eventually turned out to be a mini exercise as the majority of operators were active Gauteng members.

The race took place over a totally new stretch of countryside that had never been used before with result more repeaters were to be used than the usual West Rand Repeater.

It turned out in the end that this new “track” if one can call it that, lends itself more to the West Rand repeater and very little use was made of either HF or the alternative 145:750 repeater.

I requested all communicators to follow correct radio procedure as if it was an exercise. This we did and it worked exceptionally well, to such an extent that we eventually became aware that we had many listeners following the procedures with interest and at least one listener at the end came in and congratulated us on a job well done.

We thank both the West Rand Club and the chaps from the Magallies Club for making their repeaters available to us on Sunday the 24th of September.

Needless to say, congratulations to all the Hamnet guys and potential Hamnet operators who participated in this “exercise”, whom I have personally thanked!

GAUTENG SOUTH PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR VACANCY

There has been a vacancy in this region for quite a while. Instead of individuals making themselves available directly to me, I would this time around like to do

it in a different way.

There are approx. 13 Clubs across the Gauteng South area and many Hamnet members belong to some of these clubs. Unfortunately not all of them have an e-mail address otherwise I would have sent this directly to each Club Secretary.

However, I am asking each member who belongs to a club, to bring this suggestion to the attention of each secretary of each club. I also feel by doing it this way, it is democratic and fair on all concerned.

This is what I would like the Clubs to discuss.

From each Club, I would like a HAMNET volunteer who is prepared to take on the position of P.D. for Gauteng South. The Clubs would then send me the name of the volunteer.

Once I have all the names, I will supply them to all the Clubs who participated and then request them to decide by consultation with each other who the popular person is who will lead the Gauteng South Hamnet team.

Should the person accept the nomination and be acceptable to me, he/she will be trained to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to him/her.

All I am asking is that as many Clubs as possible in the Gauteng South area participate in getting a person nominated.

FINAL COMMENT

Yes, I am fully aware of the post Strategic Plan Teleconference having been postponed twice and that it is causing a bit of “an attitude problem” among certain people. However, as soon as Graham can be pinned down, the teleconference will take place.

It simply is due to circumstance beyond my control.

That is all for today. Comments and suggestions to: jfbotha@iburst.co.za

More information available on www.sarl.org.za then click on HAMNET in the left hand column for all the details you may need. Bulletin ends.